

Challenges in the Decentralization of Recruitment and Selection of Teachers in Kenyan Secondary Schools: A Case of Gucha District

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Abstract

Decentralization of teacher recruitment and selection in Kenya was as a result of World Bank/IMF policies, which support projects that guarantee direct net economic returns by productivity and indirect returns on externalities. The approach has been used as a way of improving service delivery. This strategy that has been successful elsewhere may not necessarily be appropriate for Kenya. Any meaningful interventions in Kenya ought to be based on research data from within the country's education system. This paper is based on a research that was conducted in Gucha district in the year 2010. The study sought to assess decentralized approach process and examined the challenges faced in the application of the approach in secondary teacher recruitment and selection. Arising from the descriptive survey research analysis and interpretation is that despite the crucial role decentralized approach play in Secondary teacher recruitment and selection, there are still some negative aspects that hinder the applicability and implementation of the approach. It was noted that, the approach has led to better staffing in rural remote schools, equity and equality in employment leading to community development and high rate of teacher trainee absorption in the employment sector. However, very little attention is paid to competence of the BOG/PTA, adequate funds, corruption, political interference and teacher performance that challenge the efficiency and effectiveness of the approach. Consequently, this paper recommends that capacity building be incorporated to the BOG/PTA members for empowerment; increase of funds set aside by the government for recruitment to increase teacher absorption rate for adequate and equal distribution; streamline decentralized approach to give it a national outlook and supervision of the exercise by professionals for sustainable development in Kenya.

Keywords: Decentralization, Teacher, Recruitment, Selection and Challenges

1. Introduction

Education as a vital component of development has to respond to the needs and challenges posed by the staffing process. Arguably, Africa's response to such needs and challenges pertinent to education could largely determine the impact of recruitment on development in the continent (Wasike, 2001). Recruitment and selection is a process through which organizations and institutions are able to hire their staff. It is an issue affecting most developing countries due to poor manpower planning where supply of labor by institutions is inversely proportional to the demand by industries.

For a very long time, until recently, the place of decentralization in development had been downplayed, overlooked and sometimes ignored in Kenya. Decentralization plays a major role in development process. Decentralization in this paper as a new public management mechanism shall be discussed in line with recruitment and selection of secondary school teachers. Decentralization is defined as the transfer of decision making authority closer to the consumer or beneficiary. This can take the form of transferring powers to the lower levels of an organization, which is called de-concentration or administrative decentralization. A popular form of de-concentration in education is to give additional responsibilities to schools. This is often called school autonomy or school based management and may take the form of creating appointed or elected school councils and giving the budgets and authorities to make important educational decisions. Decentralization may also take the form of empowering school directors and teaching faculty to make decisions within the school. As part of education and public sector reforms, many countries are decentralizing the financing and administration of educational services to regional, local or school levels. The goal of this process is to assist policy makers to refine strategies and to choose between possible options for system restructuring (Gaynor, 1998). Another type of decentralization is devolution, which entails transferring powers to lower levels of government.

Across much of Sub-Saharan, secondary education has been a weak link in student progression from primary to higher education or from primary education to employment. Over the last two decades, national governments have invested heavily in improving access to and quality of primary education, and in developing strong networks of college universities, the secondary level while not forgotten has been given lower priority and has received less attention. Governments and the international assistance organizations have largely neglected secondary education in favor of investment in primary education (UNESCO, 1999). Attention now is increasingly directed towards secondary schools with specific focus on the recruitment and selection of teachers. Demand for increased secondary provision has a consequence of greatly increased primary completion rates. As school

participation rates rise and retention rates improve, some countries are now faced with enormous demand for teachers to access better quality secondary education (Alvarez et al, 2003), overall, Sub-Saharan African is now experiencing significant demand for and growth in secondary education teachers. As a result of growth of secondary education, there is a sharply demand for high quality in secondary teachers. Projected demand in many countries far exceed projected supply. This, combined with severe budget constraints puts pressure on governments to put effective and efficient approaches to recruiting and selecting qualified secondary school teachers. In subject areas such as science and mathematics shortages of teachers may be particularly acute. In Zambia the education ministry noted a shortage of teachers of mathematics, science and English (ministry of education Zambia, 1996). A serious problem with the lack of teachers in certain disciplines, including mathematics and science has also been observed in Francophone African countries, and has sometimes resulted in subjects not being taught or being taught by non-subject specialist (Caillouds 2001, 143). The challenges of teacher supply are usually greater in secondary schools because the material to be taught is more specialized and there may be fewer qualified teachers. Shortage of teachers results in the use of unqualified teachers in schools throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. In Zimbabwe in 1992, about half of the 24,900 secondary school teachers were unqualified (World Bank, 1992).

According to Ibrahim Hussein, commission chairman, the decentralized, demand-driven method of teacher recruitment has faced new challenges including inadequate capacity at the district and school levels to manage the recruitment process. This has resulted to complaints bordering on tribalism, nepotism, and sectionalism. In a deliberate effort to address these challenges, the Teachers Service Commission has sensitized all Provincial Directors of Education and District/Municipal Education Officers on their roles in delegated teacher management functions, including teacher recruitment. In recognizing the need to ensure that the recruitment process is conducted effectively and efficiently, the Commission has developed and documented a policy on teacher recruitment and selection. The policy, which will be used to recruit teachers for primary schools and post-primary institutions, aims at improving efficiency in teacher recruitment by (i) providing direction for current and future recruitment; (ii) defining the roles of the recruiting agents; and (iii) outlining the roles and responsibilities of other actors involved in the recruitment process. The policy also provides an institutional framework for its implementation, monitoring and evaluation; and allows opportunity for review in order to address emerging issues on teacher recruitment.

Coming out clearly from these educational commission reports was the fact that the management of secondary schools had been vested on the boards of governors and all aspects of school administration are under boards of governors cloak (Mbiti, 1988). In 1996 former Teachers Service Commission (TSC) Secretary, Jackson Kangali, announced a plan to give powers to school boards to employ teachers. Besides improving efficiency, delegation empowers parents and communities in that they participate in the recruitment and supervision of teachers' (Aduda, 2001). Addressing secondary school head teachers in Nakuru town during their annual conference, Mr. Kangali took the opportunity to explain the merits and demerits of the move that was largely intended to decentralize teacher management and service delivery. Thus, the government launched the process of a school and district based teacher recruitment process where communities were expected to recruit personnel to serve their institutions. Under this arrangement, the TSC was to identify the available vacancies and advertise for applications, indicating where they were tenable. In turn the boards of governors were to conduct interviews based on guidelines provided by the TSC. They were expected to pick the best three candidates from the interview and make their recommendations to the employer, TSC manual (2002).

Expanding and rethinking the nature of secondary education in Kenya traditionally reserved for elites an instrumental role although the actual contribution has not been fully articulated within the recruitment and selection of and few others, it is becoming crucial for human resource development towards attaining the vision 2030. As the government and donors turn their attention increasingly to secondary education, policies are being established to create more widely accessible, more relevant and quality secondary education. Improving the quality of education therefore must include policies that use current resources creatively and more effectively. Teachers are the most expensive and possibly the most critical component in establishing quality education system. New and more effective approaches to the selection and recruitment of teachers accompanied by effective leadership are therefore needed to achieve higher standards of secondary education in Kenya. Based on the above analysis, decentralized approach plays a crucial role in the recruitment and selection of teachers.

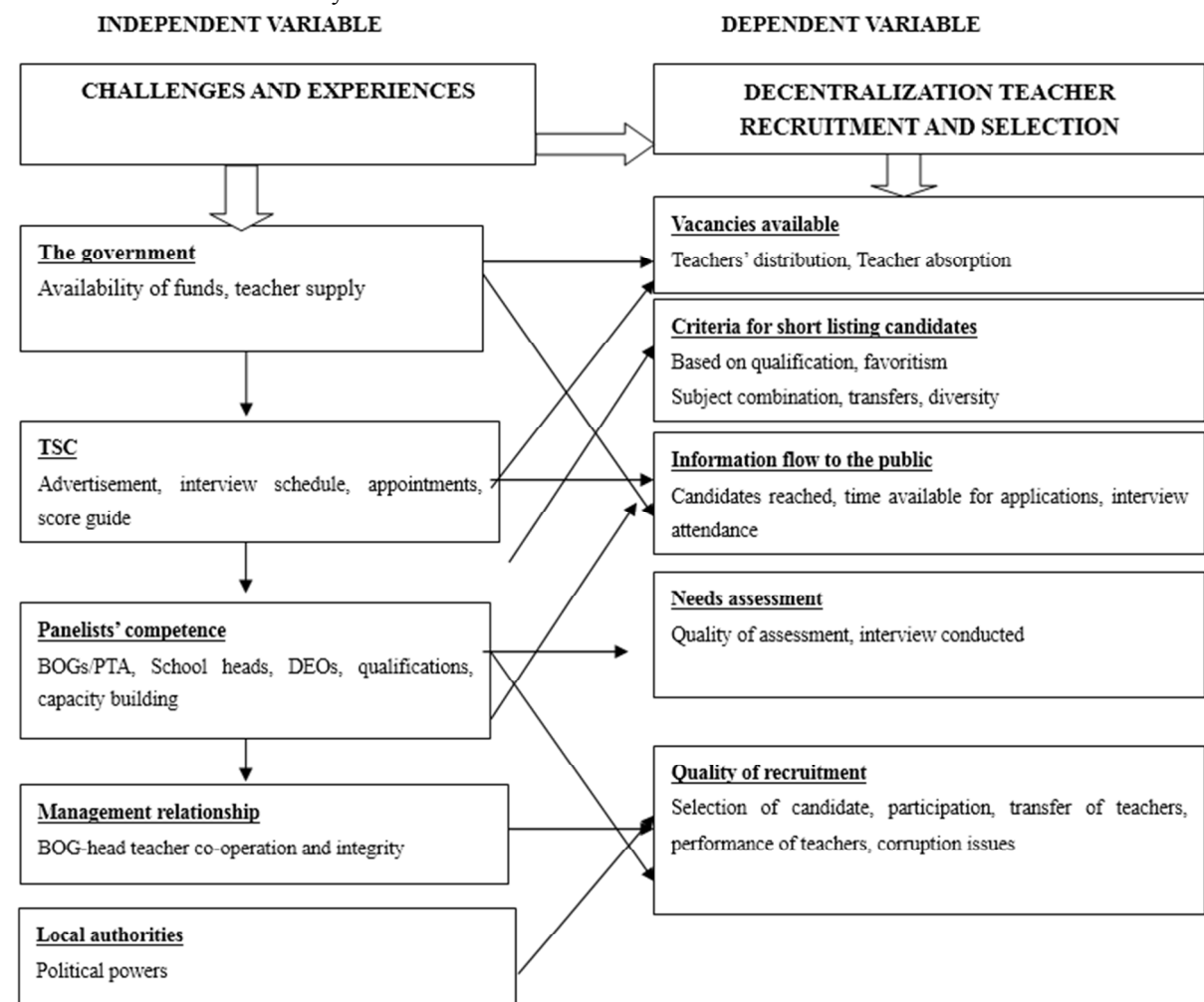
Decentralization of teacher recruitment and selection in Kenya was as a result of World Bank/IMF policies, which support projects that guarantee direct net economic returns by productivity and indirect returns on externalities. The projects are also expected to meet the private demands for education and interregional distribution (Psacharopoulos and Woodhall, 1994). These strategies that have been successful elsewhere are not necessarily appropriate for Kenya. Any meaningful interventions in Kenya ought to be based on research data from within the countries education system (Wanjala, 2005). Thus, this paper sought to examine the challenges of decentralized teacher recruitment and selection in public secondary schools and its implication in achieving the quality service delivery in teacher recruitment.

The points discussed in this paper are drawn from the findings of study conducted by the author in Gucha District in 2010. The primary objective for the study was to examine the challenges in the implementation of the approach in the recruitment and selection of teachers in Kenyan public secondary schools using Gucha District as a case study.

1.1 Research objective

The primary objective for the study was to examine the challenges in the implementation of the approach in the recruitment and selection of teachers in Kenyan public secondary schools using Gucha District as a case study. Specifically, the objectives of the study were:

1. To assess the process involved in the approach of recruitment and selection of secondary school teachers in Gucha District
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of the approach in the recruitment and selection of the secondary school teachers.
3. To examine the challenges faced in the application of the approach in the recruitment and selection of secondary school teachers.
4. To explore appropriate ways of enhancing the applicability of the approach in the recruitment and selection of secondary school teachers.



METHODOLOGY

As appreciated by Emmy and Sang (2008), the government, the Teacher Service Commission, Board of Governors, interview panelists, management relationships and local authorities play a vital role in determining the success of decentralized approach in secondary schools' teacher recruitment as shown in the conceptual framework above.

2.0 Study Area

The research study was carried out in Gucha District in Nyanza Province in Kenya. Gucha is among the many districts with a higher population, high fertility rate, poor infrastructure and scarce resources. Secondary schools

in the District are understaffed coupled with poor performance and high rate of girl child school dropout in Nyanza.

2.1 Research Design

The research was conducted through a survey design based on a sample of 22 public secondary schools in Gucha District. Survey design provides quantitative and numeric descriptions of the population (Oso and Onen, 2005). This design allowed generalizations to be made about experiences, views and attitudes of entire population being studied.

2.2 Sample Frame, Sample Size and Sampling Design.

The target population was all public secondary school teachers, Board of Governors, members of Parents Teachers Association and District Educational Officers from 22 selected public secondary schools in Gucha District. A sample of 288 respondents were selected for the study by stratified random sampling, simple random sampling and purposive random sampling. The sample was studied in order to be able to describe the whole population. A sample frame was then drawn from the 22 selected schools.

2.3 Tools for Data Collection

The survey research design used both primary and secondary data to generate information. The instruments employed included the use of questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis.

3.0 Findings and Discussions

In the first objective, to assess the process involved in decentralized teacher recruitment in secondary schools, the findings showed that many teachers were employed through the decentralized approach after 2001 and interviewed within the particular school compounds though a few were interviewed at the District Educational offices. It was found out that majority 68.7 % (92) of the schools where teachers were employed through decentralized approach were located in the rural area of Gucha District. These findings are an indication that the decentralized approach teacher recruitment is absorbing more teachers in the rural schools thus improving staffing and in turn improves service delivery in the rural schools.

It was found out that majority 61.9% (13) of the school management members (BOG/PTA) were appointed by the area MP or local authorities and higher percentage were selected right from within the school community. This might be attributed to the influence of clanism, a situation where each clan will want its own people to manage their schools. According to the policy guidelines of decentralized teacher recruitment in secondary schools, appointment of BOG members to be done by the Ministry of Education or the school sponsors to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of the recruitment approach. A member selected for the panel should have a good understanding of secondary education and hold professional ethics (Sang, 2005). The area MPs interfere with the school management because of the political powers in the society and this leads to mismanagement of administration and financial in schools rendering the approach ineffective.

In regard to the qualifications and competence of the BOGs, the study confirmed that most BOG members 42.9% (9) had up to secondary education. The information clearly indicates that competency of BOG members has not been fully taken into account thus hindering the applicability of the approach that intern slows development. Studies have shown that the performance of any school lies in the dignity and integrity of the administrators. Lang and Stoops (1998), list several attitudes which make recruitment ever more difficult for the administration. The more significant of these are public apathy about education, the all too frequent conflicts between teachers and administration and low teacher morale. Cooperation between teacher and BOG calls for understanding and competence to select candidates that will contribute positively towards better performance which impact on the country's development. Further reports from the interviews were that no capacity building was in place for the empowerment of the members as part of preparation for the recruitment and selection.

From the research findings, majority 61.9% (13) of the BOG/PTA members were just mere monitors in the recruitment exercise without being actively involved in the selection interview. This can be attributed to lack of professionalism and understanding knowledge of the content in the interview. An interviewer is eligible if he or she understands the content of the interview and holds the dignity required in the exercise (Amstrong, 2004). Otherwise the exercise may be futile when the key panelists don't contribute to effective delivery.

It was reported in the study that there were no meetings held by the panelists prior to the selection exercise to sensitize the members apart from a few who met to decide on the interview date, time and the candidate to be selected. The assumption by the district educational officers was that the panelists were eligible members who understood their work and further argued that trainings were not accounted for in the policy guidelines. This clearly shows the need for training if all the panelists are to contribute fully to the betterment of the approach.

Considerations for the selection of the candidate were highly based on academic qualifications, subject

combination, year of graduation, and experience all in line with the policy guideline. However, most panelists favored candidates from their own communities and tribes. 75% of the teachers were selected from within their own communities. There was no much emphasis on gender, this explains imbalance in male/female teachers in secondary schools. Promoting gender equality has to be in the minds of our Kenyan leaders if development has to be achieved holistically. People will always want to promote and favor their own people despite their qualifications. Proper selection ensures a high degree of satisfaction among the employees by letting them know that there is fairness in their selection for a job their capabilities are being utilized and they are not wasting their time or talent (Prasad, 1973). This feeling is likely to raise the morale of employees and may result into high levels of commitment and productivity.

The candidates also were faced with the problem of interview scheduling where either most interviews were clashing or the interview dates were kept secret. The period given for applications was also very short since the applications require adequate time for preparations of document and finance.

The research findings showed that most schools were understaffed where a good number of schools had between 10-20 TSC teachers but with improved staffing in rural schools. Despite, decentralization of recruitment, the TSC dictates the number of teachers to be employed in a given station and not as requested by the school management. However the inadequacy of teachers in schools can be a challenge posed by the government due to inadequate funds allocated that limit the vacancies availed to each school by TSC. Candidates eligible for employment are in excess but the supply of this manpower to schools is limited even though the demand is high.

It was found from the study that teachers employed through the decentralized approach were highly qualified with relevant experiences and relevant subject combinations. However, a few cases were reported where specific subject combinations were inadequate, and in such schools they ended up not recruiting teachers in the vacancies given until they sought advice from TSC. According to World Bank (1992), the challenges of teacher supply are usually greater in secondary schools because the material to be taught is more specialized and there may be fewer specialized teachers. Teachers are typically specialists in one or two subjects and there are frequent shortages in specific subjects such as Physics, history, religion and Kiswahili. The existence of a private education sector also diminishes the capacity of the state system to deploy teachers because of their positions and fare enumeration. Teacher inadequacy in the approach can also be due to the fact that most candidates limited their applications to their own communities and schools that were easily accessible.

As concerns the teacher performance, records indicated that teacher attendance was poor especially on teachers employed under decentralized approach. Teachers from within the school locality lacked commitment and accountability. Poor selection on the basis of tribe and nepotism can contribute to poor performance of teachers in their own communities. Majority of the teachers' performance from within the school locality were below average who had confidence in the people who selected them and familiarity in their own communities rather than being committed to their duties.

Among the challenges hindering the applicability of the approach: Political interference; secrecy on interview dates; limited time for application; nepotism; tribalism; biasness; bribery; crush in interviews; poor capacity building and lack of the required candidate were reported by the respondents in the study. However, corruption cases showed a decline as compared to the past years.

Reports in the DEOs' offices from school heads indicated that most candidates who applied for the interview did not show up. This could be as a result of crushing dates and time, some interviews might have been kept secret and limited time to attend all the interviews. However, a good percentage of the interviewees were selected in the first interviews.

The decentralized approach does not embrace diversity and affirmative action; only 15 percent of the staff interviewed in the study was women. Diversity is a key indicator to better performance and effective employment. Teachers being selected from within their communities show a workforce with the same experiences and upbringing. Workers need to learn new ideas from different people including tribe, gender, culture and beliefs in order to boost the performance. Despite the use of interview selection score guide, the study reported unfair recruitment. Biasness, tribalism, and nepotism were reported by candidates who missed the chance and they knew they were qualified for the job. There were a number of written complaints in the DEOs offices by candidates who felt that the selection was not done fairly to them, in return, a few candidates received regret letters from TSC after they had been selected by the interview panel.

Table 1, shows the major malpractices and challenges as reported by the respondents.

Table 1: Decentralized teacher malpractices and challenges.

Malpractice/Challenge	Teachers Frequency	Head teachers Frequency	B.O.G/PTA Frequency	Total	Percentage
Political interference	36	3	2	38	21.8
Incompetence panelists	122	5	1	128	73.6
Poor teacher qualifications	28	4	4	36	20.7
Nepotism	41	3	7	51	29.3
Tribalism	54	8	3	65	37.4
Biasness	50	1	4	55	31.6
Bribery	18	2	1	21	12.1
Crash in interview schedules	84	7	9	100	57.5
Secrecy in interview dates	49	0	1	50	28.7
Limited time for applications	110	10	11	121	69.5
Hidden applications	12	0	0	12	0.07
Poor capacity building	76	13	14	103	59.2
Unavailability of teachers	59	9	8	76	43.7

However, the researcher found out that decentralization promotes development by ensuring equal distribution of teachers in both urban and rural schools. The approach also promotes community development through employment, reduces the workload for TSC so as to handle crucial matters and strategize on development, reduces time for recruitment and selection process and improves accountability and transparency reducing levels of corruption that are key to service delivery.

Table 2: shows the respondents comments on the effectiveness and efficiency of the decentralized approach in the recruitment and selection of teachers.

Table 2: Effectiveness and efficiency of decentralized approach.

COMMENT	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Quick and fast	13	83.3
Equal distribution of teachers	10	67.7
Improved rural staffing	7	46.7
Equal employment chances	12	80
Community development	8	53.3
High teacher absorption	10	67.7
Hinder diversity	14	93.3
Low teacher performance	11	73.3
Reduced corruption	5	33.3
Minimal transfers	14	93.3
Poor capacity building	11	73.3

3.0 Conclusion

From the above discussions, it can be noted that decentralization of recruitment and selection of public secondary school teachers as expected improved teacher distribution especially in the rural areas and the number of teachers absorbed by TSC has increased. It has also promoted equity employment among teacher trainees in all parts of the country leading to remarkable development in communities. Quick service delivery has been enhanced by the approach and parental participation in teacher selection has been effected. However the system has continued to raise major concerns among education stakeholders that hinder development. As commented by Kenya Union Of Teachers (KNUT) secretary “The process should be transparent and fair to ensure that the most qualified candidate get the job”. He added, “We do not want to hear of corruption, nepotism, political interference during the exercise.” The decentralized demand driven of teacher recruitment still face challenges including nepotism, tribalism, incompetence of BOG and inadequate specific teacher-subject combination.

This then necessitates constant monitoring to discover which aspects of the reform work well in practice and which do not, to enable the designers to reinforce the successful aspects of the reform and to make remedial actions to change the unsuccessful aspects. According to Sang (2005), the central government should make sure that the design of the decentralization reforms includes specific regulations and controls to guide local decision making and that all parties should be included in developing and implementing the a decentralized teacher management system, because decentralization is a highly political issue and the extent of political will and support for it strongly influences the effectiveness of the reform.

4.0 Recommendations

From the conclusion, of the study, the following recommendations were put forward in order to help improve the

effectiveness of the decentralized approach towards achieving development.

Capacity building to the school management should be given attention. Kamunge (1988), in his report acknowledges that the role played by the BOG in management of Educational Institutions is crucial and therefore these boards should be appointed in time and well trained to enhance management. Training or in service courses should therefore be mounted for board members to equip them with basic knowledge on education issues. Head teachers also need induction on personnel management and leadership to be able to advice their boards on the best recruitment practices and mobilize their staff on effective service delivery.

On management issues, individual membership in BOG/PTA should be limited to only one school to encourage them to develop a closer interest and commitment in their school management. A good number of BOG and PTA members were found to serve in more than one school making them to be partially available.

If the TSC is to ensure fairness and effectiveness, in the recruitment of teachers, then the exercise should be under the supervision of professionals who have an understanding of the secondary education and what it demands. Professionalism is reflected on the output rather than on what manpower claims to be (Lang and Stoops, 1988).

The BOG members should be selected from outside the community. Most of them are selected from within their communities this encourages clanism and limited views. The exercise has been regionalized and localized. The TSC should streamline teacher recruitment to give it a rational outlook and encourage diversity for better performance. To ensure that there is gender balance; gender committees should be established and in-cooperated in the panel. Cares (1991), in his survey to determine among others things, some factors which affect the selection of new teachers, noted that by far, the vast majority of teachers were recruited from among the community and teachers who have practiced in that school.

Interview dates should be given by TSC and not by individual schools to promote openness and avoid crushes. Each station should have its own date for the interview. Sang (2005), indicated that some schools in certain Districts refused to shortlist qualified applicants who pose a threat to their identified candidates while other schools keep their interview dates a secret so as to achieve their sinister motives.

The time span for preparation and application should also be expanded to give candidates enough time. Some universities take a long time to release their academic certificates for their students hence students have to push for their certificates for job applications.

Above all the exercise should be streamlined to give it a national outlook by giving all the candidates equal opportunities for recruitment as long as they meet the qualifications. The interview score guide thus should be strictly followed and revised where there is need.

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